



THE SENATE
State of Hawaii

CLOSING REMARKS FOR THE 2006 LEGISLATIVE SESSION
BY SENATE PRESIDENT ROBERT BUNDA

As we neared the end of the 2006 Legislative Session on May 4th, I was reminded of a line from my Opening Day speech. I said we were capable of resolving even the most persistent of problems if we set aside politics and simply strive to do the right thing for the right reasons.

On most issues this session, we did just that. I would say that the 2006 session was session one of the most productive in memory.

On one hand, the budget surplus made it easier to meet the basic requirements of a solid financial plan. On the other hand, it made the process that much harder. As we all know, expectations grow proportionately with the size of the pie. This year, the pie was substantial, and everyone...everyone wanted a piece of it.

Our job therefore was to prioritize the needs of the state as whole. Education was one of our top priorities. We allocated funds for overdue repair and maintenance and ensured that the academic needs of our students are adequately provided for.

We continued to work one of the State's most persistent and nagging issues, affordable housing, setting aside monies for the homeless, as well as for the Rental Housing Trust Fund. While the energy focus was on the gas cap, we also tackled the more critical and long-term challenge of reducing our dependence on imported oil.

Perhaps one of the most important accomplishments of the session was tax reform. For the first time in twenty years, we adjusted the tax brackets and raised the standard deduction that will

provide 50 million dollars of tax relief to our working poor and middle-class families. It is my hope that we can continue to lower the high cost of living in our state by further adjustments to our tax structure. We need more tax breaks for the men and women in the middle who fund the bulk of government services. We have taken an important step toward meaningful tax reform this session. Although it is a move in the right direction, it is certainly not the end of the line for tax reform.

House and I want to express my gratitude to all of you who worked hard to ensure that we stayed on course. I would like to also thank our colleagues in the House for their cooperative efforts in achieving our goals, especially Speaker Calvin Say to whom I owe a debt of gratitude. I want to acknowledge too, the contributions of our loyal opposition in the Senate. Under the leadership of Senator Fred Hemmings, the minority members were an integral part of a bipartisan effort to achieve what was in the best interests of the public.

To be sure, we did not accomplish all that we hoped to do, but we set the bar high and had high expectations for this session. I believe we can be proud of our list of accomplishments. When all is said and done, I believe it can be said that we, in fact, did the right things for the right reasons.

Again, my thanks to all and I look forward to working with you in the next legislative session. Aloha and Mahalo.